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SUBJECT: CODEL BLUNT DISCUSSES PKK AND TURKEY WITH
KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN ERBIL

Classified By: Political Counselor Margaret Scobey for Reasons 1.4 (B)
and (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: In a series of meetings in the Kurdistan Region on May 31, CODEL Blunt met with Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Masud Barzani, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, and the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA) Adnan Mufti and Kamal Kirkuki. Both Nechirvan Barzani and Masud Barzani discussed the PKK and Turkey. Nechirvan expressed a more nuanced position than Masud, reflecting an apparent pragmatic sensitivity to Ankara's views. The Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA) leaders asked the CODEL for U.S. support to ensure that Kirkuk would become part of the Kurdistan region, and claimed that the Kurdish constitution guaranteed rights for all minority ethnic groups who lived in Kirkuk. SUMMARY.

Turkey and the PKK

12. (C) In a series of meetings in the Kurdistan Region on May 31, CODEL Blunt met with Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Masud Barzani, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, and the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA) Adnan Mufti and Kamal Kirkuki. Acknowledging the nearly 3,000 Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) members living in camps in Northern Iraq, KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani stated that no one has harmed the larger Kurdish cause like the PKK, whose acts of terrorism have plagued both Iraq and Turkey. According to PM Barzani, roughly 3500 people have been killed, wounded, or disabled due to the PKK. However, he continued, this is a political problem) Turkey did not understand this issue did not have a military solution. The real solution to this problem, PM Barzani continued, is for Turkey to step forward and offer amnesty and recognize the Kurds' right to existence. PM Barzani claimed that the PKK is ready to accept amnesty and the chance to live in peace within the current borders of Turkey) without demanding a separate nation for Turkish Kurds.

13. (C) In a separate conversation with the CODEL later in the day, President Masud Barzani emphasized the need to maintain good relations with Turkey, for both economic and political reasons. President Barzani stressed that the PKK's acts of terrorism affected not just Iraq but also the millions of Kurds living in Turkey. He said the PKK issue would resolve itself if the Turkish Government is truly ready for peace. President Barzani claimed that he had advised Ankara in the past to adopt a peaceful solution, including both amnesty for all but the most hardened PKK terrorists and recognizing the need for the Kurds to "express their democratic will."

Resolving Kirkuk

¶4. (C) In a separate meeting with KNA Speaker Adnan Mufti and Deputy Speaker Kamal Kirkuki, Kirkuki asked the CODEL for U.S. support to ensure that Kirkuk would be part of the Kurdistan Region. Kirkuki claimed that the rights of all groups) Turkoman, Assyrian, and Shebak) would be guaranteed under the Kurdish constitution. Later, President Barzani echoed Kirkuki's comments, stating that Kirkuk's eventual "reunification" with Kurdistan region was already implied in the Iraqi Constitution.

Comment

¶5. (C) While the Kurds' stance on Kirkuk is familiar, the more interesting story here is the slight) but significant) differences between PM Barzani and President Barzani's positions on the PKK and Turkey. Nechirvan Barzani increasing seems as if he is being groomed to take over for Masud Barzani in the line of succession as leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). His more nuanced position than Masud's, and his explicit assurance of the need to maintain the "current borders of Turkey" indicate a pragmatic sensitivity to Ankara's views, paired with a need to resolve a politically sensitive topic with a major economic partner.
KHALILZAD